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RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1958.

Index numbers of retail prices for the December quarter of 1958 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases,  
December Quarter, 1958.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from -		Index Number.	Increase from -	
		Dec. Qtr., 1957.	Sept. Qtr., 1958.		Dec. Qtr., 1957.	Sept. Qtr., 1958.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2525	6.5	1.7	2547	6.0	1.6
Toowoomba ..	2488	4.1	2.0	2508	3.7	1.7
Rockhampton ..	2510	5.1	2.2	2533	4.6	2.1
Townsville ..	2629	6.0	2.7	2660	5.7	2.5
Bundaberg ..	2498	6.0	1.3	2519	5.5	1.0
Weighted Average						
Five Towns	2527	6.2	1.8	2550	5.7	1.7
Warwick ..	2456	4.5	1.1	2469	3.9	0.6

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the December quarter, 1958, was 1.7 per cent. higher than in September quarter, 1958, continuing the general increase shown by the index in recent years. However, the increase of 6.5 per cent. during the twelve months was well above the average of the last five years. Excluding the price movements of potatoes and onions, which are subject to violent seasonal fluctuations, the index has shown a slightly rising rate of increase during the last three years, the increases in the twelve months periods ended December quarter from 1953 to 1958 having been 2.2, 1.7, 2.2, 3.6, 4.2, and 6.0 per cent. respectively.

Increased food prices accounted for almost half of the rise in the index for Brisbane in the recent quarter. Meat was chiefly responsible. The miscellaneous group also recorded a substantial rise - the largest since June 1956, which was due principally to higher tram and bus fares. Brisbane house rents increased by just under 2 per cent. over the September quarter, while the clothing index rose only slightly.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1958.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1958.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1958.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1958.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane	235.7	1.9	1.8	302.9	0.5	149.0	2.7
Toowoomba	251.1	2.8	2.2	306.9	0.6	147.6	2.4
Rockhampton	215.3	2.3	2.0	296.6	0.5	164.3	3.5
Townsville	217.3	3.7	3.5	297.6	0.5	164.6	4.0
Bundaberg	222.9	1.1	0.3	304.1	0.6	150.9	3.8
Warwick ..	237.6	1.3	0.1	306.3	0.4	152.3	2.4

Note:- A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries.

The food and grocery section (including potatoes and onions) increased in all cities. This was mainly due to increased beef prices which rose considerably in Townsville, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Brisbane, and to a lesser extent in Bundaberg and Warwick. In contrast, prices of both mutton and pork remained practically unchanged. Potato prices increased in all cities and egg prices increased in Brisbane, Townsville and Bundaberg, while there was a general tendency for flour and onions to record a very slight decrease during the quarter.

Clothing and Footwear.

There was a small upward movement in this section of the index in all cities ranging from 0.4 per cent. in Warwick to 0.6 per cent. in Toowoomba and Bundaberg. Prices of men's and women's footwear and women's summer frocks increased slightly in all cities.

Miscellaneous.

The higher Brisbane tram and bus fares contributed largely to the increases in this group. Electricity tariffs were higher in Rockhampton and Bundaberg, gas prices in Bundaberg and Brisbane, and firewood in Townsville and Rockhampton.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses).

The rent index increased in Rockhampton, 4.1 per cent.; Townsville, 2.2 per cent.; Brisbane, 1.9 per cent.; Toowoomba, 1.8 per cent.; and remained unchanged elsewhere.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time to time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. Particulars of such adjustments have been given in previous issues of this bulletin. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is varied automatically with movements of the index numbers. In Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published. Following publication of the index numbers for the December quarter, 1958, the Queensland State Industrial Court raised its basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females. In Sydney, the "C" Series index number rose by 19 points, sufficient to cause an "automatic" increase of 2s. in the male and 1s. 6d. in the female basic wage. In Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania there was no change.

Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.  
Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	Sept. Qtr., 1958.		Dec. Qtr., 1958.		Males. <sup>a</sup>			Males.		Females.		Date of Operation. <sup>b</sup>		
	A	B	A	B										
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2484	2508	2525	2547	12	3	0	13	0	0	8	16	6	2. 2. 59
Sydney	2654	2671	2673	2682	13	8	0	13	15	0	10	6	0	Feb., 1959
Melbourne	2588	2597	2635	2634	13	0	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956
Adelaide	2563	2577	2591	2593	12	16	0	12	16	0	9	12	0	26. 5. 58
Perth	2758	2764	2755	2758	13	1	0	13	13	5	8	17	9	27. 10. 58
Hobart	2727	2755	2767	2788	13	7	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.  
a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 21st May, 1958. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

The Queensland Industrial Court, on 28th January, 1959, following applications by unions, increased the "parities" or allowances which are payable in addition to the Basic Wage in districts other than the South-Eastern. These increases, to operate from the same date, 2nd February, 1959, as the increased basic wage, are as follows:- South-Western District Allowance, from 7s. 4d. to 10s. 6d. per week; Mackay, 5s. 6d. to 9s.; North-Eastern 10s. to 10s. 6d.; and North-Western, 17s. 4d. to 32s. 6d.

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## The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended Sept., 1958.	Year Ended Dec., 1958.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1957.	March, 1958.	June, 1958.	Sept., 1958.	Dec., 1958.
1. Aggregate - All Groups.								
Brisbane ..	863	2432	2471	2371	2411	2462	2484	2525
Toowoomba ..	851	2425	2449	2389	2430	2439	2440	2488
Rockhampton ..	861	2425	2456	2389	2420	2436	2456	2510
Townsville ..	912	2527	2564	2480	2519	2547	2561	2629
Bundaberg ..	841	2416	2451	2356	2402	2440	2465	2498
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	2437	2474	2380	2420	2464	2483	2527
Warwick ..	822	2390	2416	2351	2378	2401	2430	2456
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane ..	863	2459	2495	2402	2432	2492	2508	2547
Toowoomba ..	851	2451	2473	2419	2450	2468	2466	2508
Rockhampton ..	861	2452	2480	2422	2440	2465	2481	2533
Townsville ..	912	2558	2594	2517	2543	2578	2594	2660
Bundaberg ..	841	2443	2476	2387	2420	2469	2494	2519
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	2464	2498	2412	2441	2493	2508	2550
Warwick ..	822	2414	2437	2377	2396	2427	2454	2469
3. Food and Groceries.								
Brisbane ..	856	2770	2816	2689	2788	2782	2820	2874
Toowoomba ..	814	2771	2809	2708	2813	2784	2780	2858
Rockhampton ..	895	2731	2768	2675	2751	2740	2758	2822
Townsville ..	955	2872	2932	2788	2881	2896	2922	3030
Bundaberg ..	903	2830	2876	2731	2841	2864	2884	2916
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	2776	2822	2697	2795	2789	2821	2881
Warwick ..	846	2790	2821	2732	2803	2806	2820	2856
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane ..	856	2847	2886	2780	2851	2867	2888	2939
Toowoomba ..	814	2845	2876	2791	2871	2866	2852	2916
Rockhampton ..	895	2804	2834	2764	2806	2821	2825	2882
Townsville ..	955	2958	3016	2887	2946	2982	3015	3121
Bundaberg ..	903	2906	2946	2816	2895	2947	2965	2975
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	2852	2892	2788	2856	2874	2891	2946
Warwick ..	846	2857	2878	2807	2858	2877	2887	2890
5. Clothing and Footwear.								
Brisbane ..	829	3303	3318	3280	3293	3317	3322	3340
Toowoomba ..	829	3338	3351	3322	3325	3352	3354	3373
Rockhampton ..	845	3320	3331	3308	3308	3330	3334	3351
Townsville ..	840	3308	3319	3293	3296	3317	3324	3340
Bundaberg ..	839	3352	3367	3332	3339	3367	3371	3390
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	831	3309	3323	3288	3298	3322	3327	3344
Warwick ..	825	3324	3336	3306	3311	3340	3340	3352

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.